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# The Battle of Gettysburg, 1863

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## July 1: Escape to a Safe House and the first encounter with the tragedy of war

*As the sounds of battle increase and the fighting nears her home, Tillie joins a neighbor as she and her children flee to her father's (Jacob Weikert) house three miles south of town near Round Top. Tillie's parents elect to stay in town:*

"At last we reached Mr. Weikert's and were gladly welcomed to their home.



Tillie Pierce at the time of the battle

"It was not long after our arrival, until Union artillery came hurrying by. It was indeed a thrilling sight. How the men impelled their horses! How the officers urged the men as they all flew past toward the sound of the battle! Now the road is getting all cut up; they take to the fields, and all is in anxious, eager hurry! Shouting, lashing the horses, cheering the men, they all rush madly on.

"Suddenly we behold an explosion; it is that of a caisson. We see a man thrown high in the air and come down in a wheat field

close by. He is picked up and carried into the house. As they pass by I see his eyes are blown out and his whole person seems to be one black mass. The first words I hear him say are: 'Oh dear! I forgot to read my Bible today! What will my poor wife and children say'

"I saw the soldiers carry him up stairs; they laid him upon a bed and wrapped him in cotton. How I pitied that poor man! How terribly the scenes of war were being irresistibly portrayed before my vision."

## July 2: Officer brutality

*During the battle's second day fighting shifts to the area around Little Round Top. Tillie remains in the Weikert home carrying water to passing Union troops while others bake bread for the soldiers. Towards noon she witnesses an incident at the front of the house:*

Tillie Pierce married Horace Alleman in 1871. She moved to Selingsgrove, Pa. where her husband practiced law. She died in 1914.

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"This forenoon another incident occurred which I shall ever remember. While the infantry were passing, I noticed a poor, worn-out soldier crawling along on his hands and knees. An officer yelled at him, with cursing, to get up and march. The poor fellow said he could not, whereupon the officer, raising his sword, struck him down three or four times. The officer passed on. Little caring what he had done. Some of his comrades at once picked up the prostrate form and carried the unfortunate man into the house. After several hours of hard work the sufferer was brought back to consciousness. He seemed quite a young man, and was suffering from sunstroke received on the forced march. As they were carrying him in, some of the men who had witnessed this act of brutality remarked:

'We will mark that officer for this.'

"It is a pretty well established fact that many a brutal officer fell in the battle, from being shot other than by the enemy."

### July 3: The surgeon's work

*Lee aims his attack at the center of the Union line. The ferocity of the battle forces Tillie and the others to flee to a farm house farther from the fighting. Late in the day, as the battle subsides, the family decides to return to the Weikert farm:*

"Toward the close of the afternoon it was noticed that the roar of the battle was subsiding, and after all had become quiet we started back to the Weikert home. As we drove along in the cool of the evening, we noticed that everywhere confusion prevailed. Fences were thrown down near and far; knapsacks, blankets and many other articles, lay scattered here and there. The whole country seemed filled with desolation.

"Upon reaching the place I fairly shrank back aghast at the awful sight presented. The approaches were crowded with wounded, dying and dead. The air was filled with moanings, and groanings. As we passed on toward the house, we were compelled to pick our steps in order that we might not tread on the prostrate bodies.



Surgeons prepare to amputate  
Gettysburg July 1863

"When we entered the house we found it also completely filled with the wounded. We hardly knew what to do or where to go. They, however, removed most of the wounded, and thus after a while made room for the family.

"As soon as possible, we endeavored to make ourselves useful by rendering assistance in this heartrending state of affairs. I remember Mrs. Weikert went through the house, and after searching awhile, brought all the muslin and linen she could spare. This we tore into bandages and gave them to the surgeons, to bind up the poor soldier's wounds.

"By this time, amputating benches had been placed about the house. I must have become inured to seeing the terrors of battle, else I could hardly have gazed upon the scenes now presented. I was looking out of the windows facing the front yard. Near the basement door, and directly underneath the

window I was at, stood one of these benches. I saw them lifting the poor men upon it, then the surgeons sawing and cutting off arms and legs, then again probing and picking bullets from the flesh.

"Some of the soldiers fairly begged to be taken next, so great was their suffering, and so anxious were they to obtain relief.

"I saw the surgeons hastily put a cattle horn over the mouths of the wounded ones, after they were placed upon the bench. At first I did not understand the meaning of this but upon inquiry, soon learned that that was their mode of administering chloroform, in order to produce unconsciousness. But the effect in some instances were not produced; for I saw the wounded throwing themselves wildly about, and shrieking with pain while the operation was going on.

"To the south of the house, and just outside of the yard, I noticed a pile of limbs higher than the fence. It was a ghastly sight! Gazing upon these, too often the trophies of the amputating bench, I could have no other feeling, than that the whole scene was one of cruel butchery."

### The battle's aftermath

*Hearing that her family is safe in town, it is decided that Tillie should remain at the Weikert farm for a few days after the battle. On July 5, Tillie and some friends climb to the crest of Little Round Top and survey the battlefield below:*

"By this time the Union dead had been principally carried off the field, and those that remained were Confederates.

"As we stood upon those mighty boulders, and looked down into the chasms between, we beheld the dead lying there just as they had fallen during the struggle. From the summit of Little Round Top, surrounded by the wrecks of battle, we gazed upon the valley of death beneath. The view there spread out before us was terrible to contemplate! It was an awful spectacle! Dead soldiers, bloated horses, shattered cannon and caissons, thousands of small arms. In fact everything belonging to army equipments, was there in one confused and indescribable mass."



Bodies litter the battlefield as soldiers attempt to identify the dead

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